

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DHA-02 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3502

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 12367

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, RP

SUBJECT: CESAR CHAVEZ, VENI, VIDI, VICI

1. SUMMARY: CESAR CHAVEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED FARM WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO, AND PARTY HAVE JUST COMPLETED A TWO WEEKS VISIT OF THE PHILIPPINES AS GUESTS OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT. CHAVEZ RECEIVED A PRESIDENTIAL AWARD AND AN HONORARY DOCTORATE. HE TRAVELED ALL OVER AND FOUND THE RP LAND REFORM PROGRAM BETTER THAN THAT OF MEXICO. HE FEELS MARCOS AND HIS ADMINISTRATION ARE COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. HE WAS "GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THE WAY THE POOR AND THEIR NEEDS WERE GIVEN DUE RECOGNITION IN THE PHILIPPINES." THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES DID NOT ALTER HIS FAVORABLE VIEW OF WHAT HE SAW. HIS QUIET, FIRM MANNER AND WARMTH COUPLED WITH HIS NON-VIOLENT BRAND OF UNIONISM SOLD HIM AND HIS UNION TO EVERYONE WHO HEARD HIM. HOWEVER CHAVEZ APPEARS TERRIBLY NAIVE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN THE RP. HE DIDN'T SEE ONE PERSON WHO CHALLENGED MARTIAL LAW OR MARCOS. WHEN OFFERED A VISIT WITH SOME JESUITS HE REFUSED THE OFFER.

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT CHAVEZ GOT OUT OF HIS VISIT BUT THE MARCOS REGIME STRUCK A PUBLIC RELATIONS GOLD MINE ONCE AGAIN.

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END SUMMARY.

2. CESAR C. CHAVEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED FARM WORKERS, AFL-CIO, AND PARTY DEPARTED MANILA FOR SAN FRANCISCO ON AUGUST 8 AFTER A TWO WEEKS VISIT AS GUESTS OF THE GOP. CHAVEZ TRAVELED ALL OVER THE PHILIPPINES, MET AND SPOKE TO MANY GOVERNMENT AND UNION OFFICIALS AS WELL AS MANY

WORKERS IN THE RURAL PROVINCES. HE RECEIVED A PRESIDENTIAL APPRECIATION AWARD FROM PRESIDENT MARCOS AS DID ANDY IMUTEN, CHAVEZ'S ASSISTANT. ON AUGUST 6, CHAVEZ WAS ALSO PRESENTED A DOCTORAL DEGREE OF HUMANE LETTERS (HONORIS CAUSA) BY THE FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY FOR "HIS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FARM LABOR MOVEMENT." FEU PRESIDENT REYES CONFERRED THE DOCTORATE WHILE EDUCATION SECRETARY JUAN MANUEL AND ACTING SECRETARY OF LABOR AMADO INCIONG PLACED THE HOOD ON CHAVEZ.

3. CHAVEZ, IN HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, HAILED PRESIDENT MARCOS FOR HIS "HUMANISTIC NATURE AND DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF FILIPINO WORKERS." HE SAID THAT "MARCOS AND HIS ADMINISTRATION WERE COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTICULARLY TO FARM WORKERS." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT DURING HIS TWO WEEKS STAY IN THE PHILIPPINES, HE SAW THE PEOPLE UNITED IN A NATIONAL PURPOSE AND COMMON GOAL. CHAVEZ WAS QUOTED IN THE NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO AND TV AS SAYING, "WHAT I HAVE SEEN HERE JUST DOES NOT MATCH WHAT I HAVE READ ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY." HE SAID, "BEFORE ARRIVING IN MANILA I WAS PREPARED FOR THE USUAL INDICATIONS OF MARTIAL LAW, SUCH AS TROOPS AND TANKS IN THE STREETS, I SAW FEWER POLICEMEN IN MANILA THAN IN MY HOME TOWN," HE SAID. WHILE TRAVELING IN THE VISAYAS AND MINDANAO HE MADE STATEMENTS SUCH AS "I AM GREATLY IMPRESSED BY

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THE WAY THE POOR AND THEIR NEEDS ARE GIVEN DUE RECOGNITION IN THE PHILIPPINES." AND, "THIS COUNTRY'S LAND REFORM PROGRAM IS BETTER THAN THAT OF MEXICO BECAUSE IT NOT ONLY GIVES LAND TO THE FARMER, BUT ALSO SUPPORTS HIM WITH CREDIT, TECHNICIANS AND OTHER FACILITIES." ON THE "FACE THE NATION" TV SHOW, CHAVEZ ALSO EXPRESSED HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH THE DETROIT COURT DECISION ON THE TWO FILIPINO NURSES. HE SAID, "WE HELPED A BIT." IN A TWO HOUR PRIVATE CONVERSATION IN HIS MANILA HOTEL SUITE ON HIS LAST DAY IN THE RP, CHAVEZ REITERATED THE ABOVE STATEMENTS TO LABATT. HE SAID HIS PRIMARY REASON FOR WANTING TO VISIT THE RP WAS TO SEE HOW FARMERS UNIONS WERE DOING. HE ALSO WANTED TO LEARN THE TRUTH AND HE

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IS SATISFIED THAT HE KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT MARTIAL LAW AND
MARCOS.

4. WHEN LABATT PROVIDED HIM WITH A COPY OF THE PRESS RELEASE
ON THE RECENT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS REPORT ON
THE PHILIPPINES, CHAVEZ INQUIRED, "IS THIS TRUE?" HE WAS
TOLD THAT THE RP MARYKNOLL FATHERS HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN
THAT A MAN LIKE CHAVEZ WOULD LET HIMSELF BE USED THIS WAY
BY THE MARCOS REGIME. CHAVEZ SAID THAT JOURNALIST BERNIE
WIDEMAN TOLD HIM THE SAME THING A FEW DAYS AGO AND "MY
ANSWER IS THE SAME FOR BOTH: B.S." AT THAT HIS ASSISTANT
ANDY IMUTAN, HOWLED WITH LAUGHTER AT THE THOUGHT THAT ANY-
ONE THOUGHT THAT THEY COULD USE CESAR. "EVERYONE KNOWS
CESAR SPEAKS THE TRUTH" HE SAID. THEY BOTH REFUSED TO ASSIGN
THE QUALITY OF TRUTH TO ICJ. CHAVEZ ALSO REVEALED THAT RP
LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE HAD "ACCEPTED OUR INVITATION TO
ADDRESS OUR FARM WORKERS CONVENTION ON AUGUST 26 IN FRESNO,
CALIFORNIA." THIS FACT WAS LATER CONFIRMED BY SECRETARY
INCIONG. OPLE WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT BECAUSE HE
WENT TO NEW YORK TO PARTICIPATE IN THE OPENING OF THE
NATIONAL SEAMEN'S BOARD BRANCH OFFICE.

5. UPON ARRIVAL IN MANILA ON JULY 25, CHAVEZ AND HIS THREE
COLLEAGUES WERE RECEIVED BY A LARGE GROUP OF GOVERNMENT
AND LABOR LEADERS LED BY LABOR UNDERSECRETARY AMADO G.
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INCIONG, EX HUC LEADER, LUIS TARUC AND JERRY MONTEMAYOR,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS. THE VISIT WAS
ARRANGED BY LABOR SECRETARY BLAS F. OPLE WHEN HE VISITED
THE US ENROUTE HOME FROM THE ILO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA.
CHAVEZ WAS ACCOMPANIED BY ANDY IMUTON, PRESIDENT OF
PILIPINO BAYANIHAN INC OF STOCKTON, CA, DAVIS VILLARINO,
ASSISTANT TO CHAVEZ, AND BERT ABRERA, ASSISTANT TO IMUTON.
CHAVEZ'S BROTHER, RICHARD ARRIVED ON JULY 28 TO JOIN THE

PARTY FOR THE TRIP TO THE VISAYAS, MINDANAO, AND BAGUIO.

6. COMMENT:

(A) AS WAS EXPECTED, CHAVEZ SOLD HIMSELF AND THE UNITED FARM WORKERS OF AMERICA TO EVERYONE HE APPEARED BEFORE, WHETHER FILIPINO OR AMERICAN. AS ONE EMBASSY OFFICER SUMMED UP CHAVEZ'S SPEECH TO THE ASIAN LABOR EDUCATION CENTER, UP, "I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS QUIET BUT FIRM MANNER, AND ABOVE ALL, HIS WARMTH. HIS TALK WAS SIMPLE, SHORT, AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD, IN CONTRAST TO THE VOLUBLE, ENERGETIC AND AT TIMES THE ERRATIC SPEAKING STYLE OF ANDY IMUTAN. I WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY CHAVEZ'S EMPHASIS ON NON-VIOLENCE, DESPITE THE TREND IN UNIONISM TOWARD VIOLENCE, AND ON SELF-RELIANCE, STRESSING THE NEED FOR AN ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION AND A PASSIVE LEADERSHIP," CHAVEZ'S ALEC SPEECH WAS PRETTY MUCH THE STANDARD BEFORE MOST AUDIENCES INCLUDING HIS APPEARANCE ON THE TV SHOW FACE THE NATION.

(B) DESPITE ALL HIS FINE QUALITIES, CHAVEZ APPEARS TO BE TERRIBLY NAIVE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN THE RP. HE DIDN'T COME IN CONTACT WITH ONE PERSON WHO CHALLENGED MARTIAL LAW OR MARCOS. HE NEVER HEARD OF SENATOR BEN AQUINO OR SAFE HOUSES. WHEN JOHNNIE TAN OFFERED TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH THE JESUITS, CHAVEZ REFUSED. WHILE HE WAS

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RECEIVING HIS HONORARY DOCTORATE, THE UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN HAD TO CANCEL THE REGULAR 4:00 PM MASS AT THE UNIVERSITY CHAPEL BECAUSE HE HAD RECEIVED WORD THE STUDENTS WERE GOING TO TURN THE MASS INTO A DEMONSTRATION. WHEN VISITING THE NATIONAL MANPOWER AND YOUTH COUNCIL SKILL TRAINING CENTER IN METRO MANILA, CHAVEZ WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH THE BRIEFING THE DIRECTOR GAVE HIM, AND WITH THE ILO EXPERTS WHO WERE PRESENT, HE ASKED THE ILO CHIEF OF PARTY IF IT WAS POSSIBLE TO GET AN ILO PROJECT LIKE THIS IN CALIFORNIA - "OUR GOVERNMENT'S TRAINING PROJECTS ARE FAKE." THE THIRD DAY HE WAS HERE LABATT BRIEFED HIM ON THE LOCAL SCENE AND GAVE HIM AN UNCLASSIFIED REPORT ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY. BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE CHAVEZ ADMITTED THAT HE HAD NOT READ THE REPORT.

(C) IT IS HARD TO FATHOM JUST WHAT CHAVEZ AND THE UNITED FARM WORKERS GOT OUT OF THE VISIT BEYOND A LOT OF GOOD HOSPITALITY. AS FOR THE GOP THEY HAVE TO BE CREDITED WITH STRIKING PUBLIC RELATIONS GOLD. HAVING A MAN WITH CESAR CHAVEZ'S WORLD WIDE REPUTATION PUT HIS CHARISMATIC ARM AROUND THE GOP AT THE SAME TIME THE GOP IS ACCUSED OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IS FIRST CLASS PR. THE PLAN TO HAVE BLAS OPLE, A COMPETANT PUBLIC SPEAKER, ADDRESS THE FARM

WORKERS CONVENTION WHICH WILL COMMAND CONSIDERABLE MEDIA
ATTENTION IS AKIN TO GENIUS.
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Message Attributes

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